

## BOOK REVIEW

RICHARD A. MINNICH. 2008. **California's Fading Wildflowers: Lost Legacy and Biological Invasions.** (ISBN 978-0-520253537, hbk.). University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94704-1012, U.S.A. (**Orders:** [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu) or California-Princeton Fulfillment Services, 1445 Lower Ferry Road, Ewing, New Jersey 08618, U.S.A., [orders@cpfsinc.com](mailto:orders@cpfsinc.com), 1-800-777-4726). \$49.95, 360 pp., 55 illustrations (23 b&w photographs, 13 line illustrations, 19 tables), 6" x 9".

*Contents:*

1. The Golden State
2. Pre-Hispanic Herbaceous Vegetation
3. Invasion of Franciscan Annuals, Grazing, and California Pasture in the Nineteenth Century
4. A Century of Bromes and the Fading of California Wildflowers
5. Lessons from the Rose Parade

Appendix 1. Location of Franciscan campsites, Franciscan place names, and modern place names

Appendix 2. Spanish plant names for California vegetation

Appendix 3. Selected earliest botanical collections of exotic annual species in California

Appendix 4. References to wildflowers in the Los Angeles Times, The Desert Magazine, and the Riverside Press Enterprise

*California's Fading Wildflowers* by Richard A. Minnich is a wonderful example of how human development in an area, or in this case, the entire state of California has forever shaped its flora. The book is extremely well researched to illustrate how California was settled from San Diego to San Francisco. It accurately displays how human agricultural practices and use of livestock on the land—in a time when only 200 or so people lived in a given area—still greatly affected the native vegetation from the coast inland to the central valley.

The book goes back to get information on early California from the journals of early explorers and then on into the mid 1800s where the flora really begins to see a shift towards grasses and away from the native wildflowers when cattle took over as the Gold Rush hit the state. The data from plant material then shifts to more modern techniques of taking plant material found within the bricks of old buildings and identifying the flora of the area at a given time period.

Large quantities of the book are dedicated to the beautiful and now protected, California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*). There are also specific references to the grizzly bear, now extinct in California, which effectively illustrate how important a role conservation and environmental management play in a state that is as geographically diverse and as densely populated as California. Altogether this is an enjoyable read which gives historical insight into how much the state has changed in the last 300 years.—Rebecca Swadek, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas 76102-4025, U.S.A.